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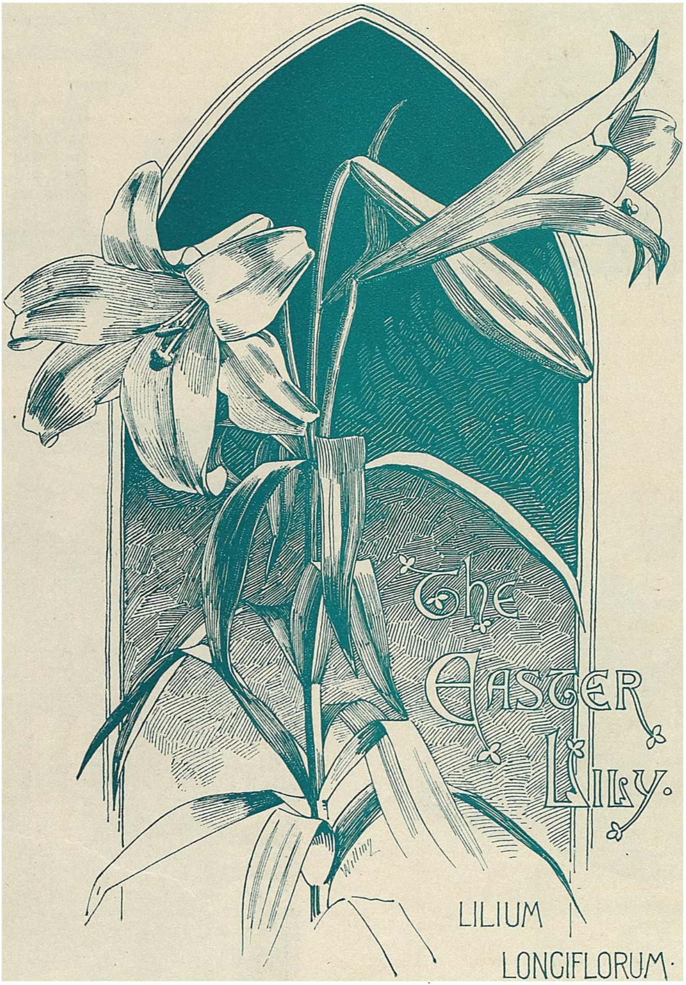
THE STUDY OF COLORING.

By John Collier.

THE first thing to be done is to train the eye to accuracy in color as it has been trained to accuracy in form. Unfortunately, the first is much more difficult than the second. It is easy to find a teacher who can judge of accuracy in drawing; but to find one who can judge, with any nicety, of accuracy in colors is rare indeed. But in this, as in most other things, the greater part of the difficulty can be overcome by the pupil himself. Let him take some object, such as a plaster cast (an old one by preference, as this is sure to have acquired a considerable variety of tones which are well adapted to try the skill of the beginner), and place it in a good light with a simple background behind it. Let him now place his canvas with the outline of the object carefully drawn upon it in a good side light where there is no shine upon its surface. Let him then mix a color with his palette-knife to match any of the tints of the object; when he thinks he has something like the tint, he should hold up his palette-knife in front of the object; if the loaded palette-knife can hardly be distinguished from the part of the object it is desired to match, then, and not till then, has the required tint been obtained. When obtained it should be transferred to its proper place on the canvas, and another part matched in the same way.



If one obvious precaution is observed, viz., that the palette-knife shall have much the same light upon it that the canvas has (a full light and no shine), the operation is a very simple one, only requiring a very moderately good eye and a great deal of patience; and by its means a picture can be produced, of any simple object, which will reproduce its tints with great accuracy.

When this has been practiced sufficiently to give a high standard of accuracy, the student may try the method pursued by Mr. Millais. Place the canvas side by side with the object to be represented, only taking care to have it in a good light, and walk backwards and forwards between each touch, so that you are continually looking from a distance at the picture and the object placed side by side. When your picture is finished, there should be hardly any difference between it and the object. If there is much difference you can see what it is and correct it accordingly. This again is a method that renders the pupil to a great extent independent of any teacher. If he be honest with himself he can tell where the differences lie between his picture and the object represented, provided he can stand away from them and see them side by side. This gives such a direct means of comparison that none but a very dull eye can fail to detect a discrepancy, and if the student can only see his faults he can learn to correct them. The seeing correctly is the one important thing.

Should this method not be adopted, it is, nevertheless, highly desirable to continually look at the picture one is painting from the distance at which it is meant to be seen when finished. No amount of calculation will enable a man who is looking at a picture three feet away to tell with any accuracy what it will look like at a distance of ten feet. The experiment must be continually tried during the progress of the work. It is also highly advisable to have a looking glass at hand. There are certain faults of distortion to which the eye readily accustoms itself. They can then no longer be detected by direct vision, but when inverted in the glass they strike the eye immediately. For instance, supposing a row of perpendicular palisades have been drawn by mistake leaning a little towards the right; the eye soon gets used to this, and accepts all lines in the picture leaning a little to the right as perpendicular. But when these said lines are seen in the looking-glass they lean to the left, so that their divergence from the perpendicular is at once detected, in fact it appears twice as much as it really is.